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SCHOOLROOM DECORATION

One of the encouraging signs of an increased interest in art is the activity in many of our larger cities toward schoolroom decoration. Societies are formed for this one object, while many people and clubs are offering assistance and advice. There was held recently at the Art Institute of Chicago a very interesting exhibition of prints, photographs, engravings, etc., that were chosen for schools of the different grades. It was well chosen, and most of the material would be interesting and instructive if not in some cases overly decorative. A great deal has been said and will be said about the advisability of using classic examples rather than more immediately instructive and characteristic examples of art.

It is important that national art and national history and national men should have a very important place, provided the art that expresses it is good; otherwise it would be at least safer to go back to the old masters and the regulation standards in sculpture, architecture and painting. The vitality of impression comes from things near and known rather than from things remote and unknown, however fine otherwise.

Color is a very great agent toward interesting children, but good things in color are hard to find and expensive. A successful attempt has been made in Chicago to copy (and on a larger scale sometimes) well-known works, which, when framed, make a very effective picture. Even these are prohibitive in price, while the supply is limited.

The idea of making a series of colored pictures, using important events in American history for subjects and treating them in a broad, poster-like fashion, has much to commend it. Miss Blanche Ostertag has begun on such a series, and the first one is reproduced in this number of BRUSH AND PENCIL.

They will be printed by lithography in eight impressions, in colors restful and attractive to the eye; twenty-six by thirty-two inches in size, sufficiently large to hang above a blackboard or molding, and thoroughly good in national sentiment, broad in mass, and strong and simple in effect, interesting to pupils and adults.

The publishers of BRUSH AND PENCIL are interested in this question of school decoration, as it is directly in line with the work of this magazine, and will publish these pictures, in the hope of aiding the cause in a manner hitherto impossible.

The price will be nominal. The pictures will be mounted on heavy pulp board and varnished, so that they may be nailed to the walls without framing if desired.

[Not long ago we received the following from a friend in Aurora, and we add it to the above as another expression of the interest awakened in schoolroom decoration.—Ed.]

I have been wondering who are the greatest gainers from the art decorations in schools—the children, their teachers or members of the women's clubs, who, perhaps, set the ball in motion? The benefit is not all on one side certainly. Teachers have been compelled to brush up in art matters in order to answer the questions of pupils. And are not club-women enabled to talk learnedly of Della Robbia, Thorwaldsen, Correggio and a score of other unpronounceable foreigners, greatly to the admiration and wonder of some of us ordinary people? The beauty of it all is that they are entirely safe from correction, be their mistakes ever so serious.

I think the most significant sign of the times, and the most auspicious, is the fad, if you like, for schoolroom decoration. It represents the line of cleavage between the commercialism of the past and the culture and refinement of the future. It is public recognition that beauty and sentiment have a practical value in the development of mankind, and should have a large place in education. It is noticeable, too, that in all this worship of the old masters and of the beautiful, cultivation of the true American spirit is not neglected. For we find in nearly every schoolroom the Madonna and Child, indicative of the religious life of the nation, and the calm features of the immortal Washington, that great exponent of our political faith.

CHARLES PIERCE BURTON.

Aurora, Illinois.



LIFE THE ACCUSER

If we may take the awards of the jury in this year's exhibit at the Carnegie Galleries as fairly illustrative, and I believe that we may, it would seem that the standards which are the basis of what is generally accepted as authoritative opinion in current art, are not such as will recommend themselves to people who think of human life as significant in itself and outside of its possibilities as an artistic effect.

Undoubtedly there are excellencies in the five paintings officially distinguished that are hardly suggested in the black and white reproductions shown in the December number of BRUSH AND PENCIL. Yet, leaving Mr. Tryon's landscape and Mr. Weir's "Roses" out of the discussion, as they are not related to the question here raised, the other three pictures, in each of which the human figure is the prominent feature of the composition, give but the slightest impression of those things in life which lie under its textures and its dress.

I think that the young lady in Childe Hassam's "The Sea" would, if she could speak, say something like this: "Oh, Mr. Painter! pray why do you treat me so? It is very nice, so far as it goes, this delicious shimmery, out-of-door ('plein air,' I think you call it) effect; but you have forgotten that I sometimes think and am quite in the